



## Colonel. Mant "Gator" Hawkins

Originally from Wichita, KS, Col. Hawkins was commissioned a 2ndLt. after receiving his Bachelor of Science Degree from The Citadel in 1980. In January 1981, he graduated from The Basic School and reported to Pensacola, FL for Aviation Indoctrination and Basic Flight training.

In 1982, after completing jet training in Beeville, TX, Col. Hawkins was winged and selectively retained as a flight instructor. In 1984, Col. Hawkins attended initial FA-18 training at VFA-125 in Lemoore, CA before reporting to VMFA-314, MCAS El Toro. In 1985 Col. Hawkins deployed for eight months onboard the USS Coral Sea for the first F/A-18 combat cruise, culminating with his participation in the planning and execution of OPERATION EL DORADO CANYON. While assigned to *The Black Knights*, Col. Hawkins attended the Navy Fighter Weapons School, performed the duties as Personnel Officer, Flight Officer and Pilot Training Officer.

In 1987 Col. Hawkins reported to the Navy Fighter Weapons as the first "Hornet Baby" TOPGUN instructor. During this tour, Col. Hawkins served as the A-4E/F and TA-4J Quality Assurance Officer, the Navy's F-16/A-4 Model Manager, NATOPS Officer, Tactics and Development Officer and finally the Staff Standardization Officer. While instructing at TOPGUN, Col. Hawkins flew several different fighter aircraft while remaining current in the FA-18, A-4 and F-16.

Reassigned to the Operating Forces in July of 1990, Col. Hawkins reported to VMFA-115 in Beaufort, SC. As a Silver Eagle, he deployed twice to WestPac on the Unit Deployment and held the billets of Pilot Training Officer, Assistant Operations Officer, Operations Officer, Logistics Officer and Aircraft Maintenance Officer. In June of 1994, Col. Hawkins transferred to the 31<sup>st</sup> MEU (SOC) in Okinawa, Japan. While on this thirteen-month unaccompanied tour, Col Hawkins deployed on two different Asian cruises aboard the USS Belleau Wood and held the billets of Air Officer and MEU Assistant Operations Officer.

Orders to Command and Staff College in 1995 sent Col. Hawkins from Japan to the Marine Corps University in Quantico, VA. After graduation, Col. Hawkins returned to Beaufort, SC for duties as the Executive Officer of VMFA(AW)-332 and then MAG -31 Operations Officer. In May of 1999, Col Hawkins deployed as the MAG-31 (FWD) Executive Officer/Operations Officer for an expeditionary combat deployment to Taszar AB, Hungary and OPERATIONS ALLIED FORCE and JOINT GUARDIAN.

Col. Hawkins Commanded *The Hawks* of VMFA (AW)-533 from 1999 to 2001. During this tour *The Hawks* became the Marine Corps' first MEU(SOC) certified FA-18 squadron and deployed with the 31<sup>st</sup> MEU(SOC), synchronizing ARG/MEU support with a KC-130-F/A-18 island hopping deployment, ranging from Japan to Australia. A graduate of The Air War College in 2002, Col Hawkins was assigned to the MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP) in Quantico, VA where he served as the Director and Deputy Director.

Col. Hawkins has two Masters Degrees, one in Military Science from the Marine Corps University, and the other in Strategic Studies from the Air War College. He has over 4300 accident free flight hours in military aircraft. His Personal decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, and the Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medal with three Gold Stars.

Colonel Hawkins is married to the former Elizabeth Solomon of Denver, CO and has one son, Trey, and two daughters Hannah and Jordan.